

Bringing the Peer Review Process from Okay to Outstanding

Client

Two hospitals—a teaching hospital with over 800 beds and a 400-bed hospital—that are part of a seven-hospital health system.

Case study

Unlike many hospitals that revamp their peer review processes to overcome sour medical staff politics, a punitive culture, and gross miscommunications, the two hospitals profiled simply wanted to weed out inefficiencies. With the help of The Greeley Company, the hospitals were able to streamline and standardize their peer review processes.

The 400-bed hospital started redesigning its peer review process years ago, and the results inspired medical staff leadership at the 800-bed hospital to follow suit two years later. Both hospitals kicked off their redesigns by eliminating the department-based peer review committees.

“Cases would go back and forth between departments with never really getting an answer. The resolution was often to create some new form or check box,” said one medical staff president about the hospital’s previous department-based peer review system. “It was incidental problem management, and it was really inefficient.”

The 400-bed hospital created a single multi-disciplinary peer review committee that it calls the physician excellence committee, while the 800-bed teaching hospital created two multi-disciplinary peer review committees: one for adult services and one for maternal and pediatric services. The new multi-disciplinary committees have taken the focus off individuals and placed it on improving processes and outcomes by adopting rate, rule, and review indicators.

“Physicians can make excellent decisions and have bad outcomes. Conversely, they can make horrible decisions and have positive outcomes,” says the medical staff president. “We’ve separated the outcome from the decisions that physicians made.”

The chief medical officer at the larger teaching hospital also notes that the previous peer review process was more subjective. As a result, physicians wondered why their cases were being reviewed when colleagues who had similar outcomes were not being reviewed. “Because there are now clear criteria, if there is a certain event and it falls into our threshold for review, it is reviewed. It eliminates the question of ‘why me?’” notes the chief medical officer.

These objective measures take into consideration a physician’s total number of patient encounters to judge whether that physician is experiencing a downward performance trend. Previously, a physician might have had a complication from surgery, but if that individual only did five surgeries per year, that case was treated no differently than a physician who did 200 surgeries a year, for example.

“If there was any part of this that scared people the most, it was the idea that a non-OB would be evaluating an OB’s decisions,” noted the medical staff president. To gain buy-in from medical staff members, the medical staff president went to departmental monthly meetings with case examples and explained that most of the time, the technical aspects of care are not what triggers the committee to review a case; rather, peer review focuses on whether the care plan for the patient was appropriate.

The president of the teaching hospital says that the new peer review system has led to deeper discussion among physicians about how to evaluate the care provided at both hospitals. “I feel like we finally have the forum to use this as an educational environment to improve care.”

5 Steps to a Contemporary Peer Review Program

To be successful in engaging physicians in effective peer review, the tools for conducting peer review must reduce bias and create a physician improvement oriented culture. **The Greeley Company** addresses both of these critical components through the following steps:

1. Define the committee structure to reduce bias and conflict of interest
2. Standardize the case review process to improve case screening and reliability
3. Set expectations for all six physician core competencies
4. Select the right indicators, attribution, and targets to ensure fairness and save physician time
5. Provide useful and timely reports for physician feedback and OPPE to recognize excellence as well as improvement opportunities and drive accountability

ABOUT GREELEY

The Greeley Company

Headquartered in the greater Boston area, The Greeley Company serves administrative and clinical teams in more than 500 healthcare organizations nationwide each year—ranging from the largest healthcare systems and academic medical centers to critical access rural hospitals. We have a rich history of providing innovative consulting, education, outsourcing solutions, interim staffing, and external peer review to healthcare organizations nationwide. Greeley focuses on contemporary needs and challenges related to medical staff optimization & physician alignment; accreditation, regulatory compliance & quality; and credentialing & privileging.

Our mission

The Greeley Company's mission is to help healthcare organizations improve efficiency, comply with regulations and standards, achieve practitioner engagement and alignment, and excel in delivering high-quality, cost-effective patient care.

Our clients

Our clients include healthcare organizations of all sizes and types—from large, multi-setting healthcare systems and academic medical centers to critical access rural hospitals. We work with clinical and administrative individuals and teams across the entire organization including physicians, executives, directors, managers, and frontline staff.

Our advisors and staff

The Greeley Company provides our clients with a dedicated team of advisors who bring valuable experience and rich backgrounds as former hospital, nurse, and physician executives, as former “Big 4” consultants, and as former regulatory surveyors. Our professionals understand your pain and provide the breadth and depth of preparation, training, and education needed to drive success. Behind our advisors stand talented management and support staff committed to ensuring the highest level of customized attention and client fulfillment.

Contact us

Please contact us at 888/749-3054 or info@greeley.com for more information on how The Greeley Company can help you meet your challenges and goals.